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18 Sep 84
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Talking Points for NSPG Meeting re Next Steps in Vienna
18 September 1984

The reporting we have on purpose of Gromyko meeting is very flimsy-- [] reports of doubtful quality and no clear direction.

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The surrounding circumstances point to a negative outlook on the meeting.

The Politburo is focused on a succession struggle which is already underway.

Chernenko and Gorbachev have a recent record of slightly more positive statements on US-Soviet relations, if the US makes concessions. But the overall tendency is for all the members of the Politburo to seek political safety in a hard line.

Gromyko's personal authority over the shaping and execution of Soviet foreign policy is great. But he has to operate from a Politburo consensus, and, given the succession struggle, has to be wary of uncleared initiatives.

Gromyko is probably coming to the US to continue the policies of the recent past, to try once again to put the Administration on the defensive and to air the Soviet indictment of its policies, and possibly to set up events that will hurt campaign prospects.

Soviet solicitation of a meeting with Mondale is a clumsy effort to mute any political benefit from your meeting with Gromyko.

Gromyko is more influential now than ever in shaping the Politburo guidance he'll be operating from. He is unlikely to have an interest in repudiating his recent policies.

If the Soviets were planning a positive tack in US-Soviet relations, they would be preparing various constituencies for it, especially in East Europe. We see no evidence of this.

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